

## Slight of Hand

Catherine Hammond, moderator

She learns the trick from a family friend, the coin from nothing, pulled from her ear, her waist, behind an ankle.

Before long, she can reach above her head, extract castanets from air—click click click click click click click. Clickety, she moves to a train. If someone's children shut the blinds to keep her from seeing the ocean, easy enough. Why, she flips all the cars, engine first, and presses her nose to the window.

There on the horizon a ship sounds 3 short blasts of the horn, dismissal from drill.

A concern about time—too late for the restaurant car?

A flick of the wrist—vichyssoise.

## What If Everyone

Catherine Hammond, moderator

The woman wants a house with stairs, even if small steps mean narrowing. Her plan to place pots all the way up, hyacinths, daffodils, maybe crocus,

easy to force. In the room at the foot of the stairs, a fireplace with a log burning like a bolt of cloth rolled tight. Dead Sea scrolls crumbling,

Sappho fragments, only a word visible here or there. The woman tends shag cedar, bark with strands like hair turning black, glow of coals,

a line of flame like neon flashing, What if everyone wanted to do that? The woman continues to stare, scorpions under the bark.

In the hole in the roof, the place where stairs open, she sees clouds filled with rust. A gap displays three stars, the belt of Orion. From deep in the fire, she hears tap, tapping

from a snare drum, unsure brushing, a fear of snagging the rim. Nevermind. She looks out to find the Broadway moon, full and the closest all year.

## **Anyway**

## Catherine Hammond, moderator

None of this story has happened yet. Well, the part with the woman discovering the word in the corner. Call it *furniture*, she says, a bench from an ancient mead hall, only small. A stool, to be honest, with only three legs. So little to stand on. This was the one word the woman hoped

not to find. Actually, there were others but this is the one she found. What was she doing in that corner? No furniture in the whole house except this chair with its missing back. Not missing, remember, just lacking anything but minimal legs and that rough slab of wood.

If the woman decides to stay in the house she could sit right here. Or she could use the house empty—and who can say? We agree on one thing. She did arrive on the doorstep with no memory of how.

The woman thinks about moving the chair to the center of the room but rejects the bullseye, the solace of a fixed point. Still,

what if she's wrong about the word? What if it turns out to be *candle* or *fumigate*  or *friction*? Later, after she's had the chance to sit awhile, she'll figure out that piece. Of course,

at some moment she'll need to worry about the suitcase and what's inside. The horseshoe—no problem. How much time can anyone need to pick up a horseshoe?